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SUBJECT: HUMAN RIGHTS CLINICS IN MOROCCO -- SPENDING MONEY
WISELY

REF: RABAT 00357

¶1. (U) This cable is sensitive but unclassified. Please treat accordingly.

¶2. (U) This is an action request. See paragraphs 3 and 4.

¶3. (SBU) Summary: On April 18, Poloff and Laboff visited the Human Rights Clinical Legal Education program at Hassan II University in Mohammedia, located between Casablanca and Rabat. The program, one of the American Bar Association (ABA) initiatives, received a DRL grant which ended March 31. A two-month no-cost extension has meant the program will continue through May. The continued funding of the program is still in question (reftel). This successful program is a "first" in Morocco: law students have "hands-on" clinical training and experience prior to joining firms. Meeting with

the ABA developers, university administrators, the supervisory lawyer and primarily the students was an exhilarating experience. This effort is the only on-going programmatic link the USG has with a university in Morocco, and the importance of positive interaction with Moroccan students cannot be overstated. Continued DRL-funding of this ABA project is integral to the Mission's reform strategy relating to the "rule of law." End Summary.

¶4. (SBU) As noted reftel, the Mission strongly supports this ABA project and requests, while recognizing that Department funds are limited, that the program be funded for at least another year. The program has successfully brought together Moroccan human rights lawyers and advocates, university faculty and US legal experts to develop a human rights clinical legal education program. This program is the first of its kind in Morocco and is having a direct impact on shaping how the next generation of lawyers approach human rights violations in Morocco.

The Clinic

¶3. (U) Poloff and Laboff visited the Human Rights Clinical Legal Education program at Hassan II University in Mohammedia on April 18. This initiative is one of the ABA programs being conducted in Morocco. Twenty-two students participate in the program -- there are eleven women and eleven men. Students work in teams of two on each of the cases. At the time of the visit, there were ten cases with more expected.

While the original plans were to work on women's labor cases, the Fez Center for People's Rights (reftel) required more organizational time. The cases are referred to the clinic by two unions: the Democratic Federation of Workers (FDT) and the Democratic Confederation of Workers (CDT). The cases cover the textile and transport sectors. Most of the cases relate to the change in the Labor Code which shortened the work week from forty-eight to forty-four hours per week. Employers are, however, requiring employees to remain on the old schedule without paying them overtime.

14. (SBU) Students, under the direction of a supervisory Moroccan lawyer, interview clients, review cases, research the legal issues and prepare briefs on the cases. The supervisory lawyer works with students individually, as teams, and in one large group. The students, however, work alone with the clients. The ABA is using a system as close as possible to legal clinics in US law schools. As this system is new to Morocco, the university law faculty is watching the students' progress and the relationship they have with the supervisory lawyer with great interest. The clinic recently received permission for the Mohammedia labor delegate to present their cases to local labor inspectors. Pleading the cases will provide the students with another important training experience.

The Students

15. (SBU) The students eagerly discussed their cases with Missionoffs. Several of the students live in Casablanca, others live in villages traveling many hours to get to the university. All seemed dedicated to the clinic and talked knowledgeably about human rights in general and labor issues

specifically. One group of students wanted Poloff to know that labor issues have an impact on all segments of society and these issues form the core of many of Morocco's problems.

16. (SBU) The program has a policy of accepting qualified students on the basis of their grades and future interests. There is no requirement that the students speak both French and Arabic and in fact there are two students from Cameroon in the program, neither of whom speak Arabic, to demonstrate that point. Since most of the current clients speak only Arabic an outside translator is required but does not seem to hinder the progress of the teams. Many of the students were excited that ABA seemed eager to expand the program to include women and children,s labor issues addressing the problems of those they deemed most vulnerable. Some related personal stories of friends and family members in these two groups who currently feel they have little or no recourse for their complaints and nowhere to turn.

The Future

17. (SBU) In order for the clinic to be an integral part of the students' training, it must function as close to a "real" legal office as possible; consequently, year-round activities are necessary. Applications will be solicited from students before the end of the current semester (June 20) to work in the clinic full time (40 hours per week). Three to five students will be accepted; they will not receive salaries. The students will work closely with the supervisory lawyer, carry a significant caseload, and gain invaluable experience.

The summer experience will also allow for unresolved cases to be completed, and, the development of "know your legal rights" classes for workers. If the program continues to receive DRL funding, the summer program will be expanded to include more students, and, training sessions for students who have completed the two semester program.

18. (SBU) With additional funding, the clinic will extend its services to other labor unions, form partnerships with nongovernmental organizations and conduct extensive training

sessions on labor rights. Because of the success of the program and the enthusiasm the students have generated, the university administration expects 500 students to apply for the program for the next academic year.

Comment

18. (SBU) The law faculty and administration remain strongly supportive of the program. In fact, it appears that the teaching techniques and the "hands-on" experience may have a broader impact than originally expected. In discussing the future of the program, an agreement has been reached that the clinic will continue to concentrate on labor issues, including women and child labor. The university will assume the cost of the program administrator during the summer, another in-kind financial contribution (reftel). Without continued funding, however, this exceptional program will not be able to continue, nor will it be possible for the university to devise and implement its program for sustaining the clinic (reftel).

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Riley